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Author(s): Caroline Chappell

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# ‘Recognition of cultural diversity cannot justify inaction on FGM’ : Common themes from attempts to eradicate FGM

by Caroline Chappell M.A. Hons (Oxon), Solicitor, FHEA  
Senior Lecturer in Law, University of Chester



# The 1920s – attempts to restrict/ eradicate FGM

- \* Pedersen (1991)
- \* 1926 - Governors in colonial Kenya issue guidelines
- \* 1929 – Protestant Christian Missionaries refuse communion
- \* Unrest ensues amongst the Kikuyu
- \* FGM used by tribal political groupings to gain support
- \* Kikuyu Central Association (KCA)

# The Duchess of Atholl and Eleanor Rathbone – Female pioneers

\* Duchess of Atholl



Eleanor Rathbone



# Why did attempts to eradicate fail?

- \* Ingrained tradition
- \* A lack of will on the part of the Government and Colonial Administration
- \* The social mores of the time
- \* A failure to understand both what FGM was (termed '*female circumcision*' then) and its implications for women at a macro-ethical level

# Themes arising from student answers to FGM question

- \* Cultural diversity
- \* *'By far the most important factor is excessive cultural sensitivity : quite simply there is a reluctance to combat the practice of FGM for fear of appearing reactionary or prejudiced.'* Bindel (2014)
- \* Autonomy and the failure to grasp the macro-ethical and societal principles
- \* Double standards – cosmetic surgery

# Conclusions

- \* Issues surrounding cultural sensitivity should not be allowed to impede the fight against FGM
- \* There must be resistance to any suggestion that there exists a compromise position in the context of the four recognised types of FGM
- \* The fight to eradicate FGM must confront prudish sensibilities and articulate and publicise both the nature of FGM and the harm it causes.
- \* There is no one solution. A multi-track and multidisciplinary approach is needed